

U.S. Department of the Interior Travel Reinvention Lab



Guidelines for Implementation

APRIL 15, 1997

Purpose of These Guidelines

The purpose of the attached guidelines is to assist bureaus/offices in implementing the recommendations of the DOI Travel Reinvention Lab.

I. OVERVIEW

A. Precepts and General Framework

In the increasingly resource-constrained environment of the 1990's, the Department must find new ways of leveraging its precious resources. Travel should be viewed as a program and mission enabler rather than a purely regulatory process. Managers, who are responsible for managing resources to produce results, must be empowered to authorize and approve the travel which is undertaken in support of program and mission goals. Employees, who perform official travel, must be treated as responsible adults. Employees traveling on official business should not be expected to use their own personal funds to finance official travel. The cost-effective use of professional travel service providers should be utilized, to the maximum extent possible, to make travel as convenient and painless as possible. The travel process itself should be made as efficient as possible, and non-value added steps should be eliminated, whenever possible. Technology should be fully exploited to integrate the travel process into our day-to-day operations.

To accomplish this vision, a series of coordinated actions will be necessary. The new roles, responsibilities and expectations for all employees will need to be fully communicated. In addition, a "clean up" effort of delinquent travel advances and delinquent individual American Express Card accounts will need to be undertaken, so that other Travel Lab recommendations can be carried out.

B. Communication of Roles and Responsibilities of all Employees

The Travel Lab found that while the existing travel process contained a very elaborate set of controls over many aspects of the travel process, it lacked an "accountable owner", did not focus on program/mission accomplishment, and was unnecessarily cumbersome and costly to administer. To correct these deficiencies, the Travel Lab recommended that travel be recognized as a program and mission enabler; that supervisors be empowered to authorize and approve necessary travel and that employees be treated as responsible adults in carrying out travel assignments in the most efficient and effective manner.

To ensure that the new roles, responsibilities and expectations were communicated and fully understood by all employees, the Travel Lab Report recommended that all employees sign a "Travel Code of Ethics". While bureaus agreed with the need to fully communicate the roles, responsibilities, and expectations associated with the streamlined travel process to employees, it was suggested that a more expedient means would be to make this information **an integral part of the Travel Authorization form itself** (which is signed by both the employee and his/her supervisor). The Travel Lab agrees with this recommendation, and is attaching a prototype Travel Authorization form for this purpose in Exhibit A.

C. Clean up Effort on Delinquent Travel Advances and Individual Travel Charge Card Balances

The proposed Travel Lab recommendations place an even greater reliance on the use of the Government-sponsored travel charge card, and ATM privileges, for financing official travel. In order to achieve this goal, it will be necessary to launch a “clean up” effort to collect delinquent travel advances and reduce the Department’s unacceptably large delinquency rate on individual travel charge card balances.

This Department-wide effort will be launched in March 1997, with the direct involvement and participation of Bureau Directors. It is expected to be an ongoing effort thereafter.

D. Delegation of Authority to Authorize and Approve Travel to the Lowest Level of Supervision

The Travel Lab found that in some bureaus/offices, as many as four signatures were necessary to create a travel authorization, and as many as eight signatures were necessary to review/approve a travel voucher. As directed in Bonnie Cohen’s memorandum of April 8, 1996, bureaus/offices should take the necessary actions to ensure that supervisors are empowered to authorize and approve travel at the lowest possible level.

II. Payment Related Travel Policy Changes

A. Expected Use of the Government-Sponsored Travel Charge Card and ATM Privileges

Employees who are expected to travel on official Government business should be issued a Government sponsored individual charge card with ATM privileges. It is expected that the Government-Sponsored Travel charge card will be used to pay for travel-related expenses such as lodging, rental cars, meals, and travel advances while on official travel.

Bureaus/offices should take necessary steps to ensure that employees who are expected to travel on official business receive a Government-sponsored individual charge card. It is strongly recommended that bureau/office procedures include supervisory approval and/or acknowledgment to avoid issuance of duplicate cards. Bureaus/offices should take periodic steps to ensure this policy is carried out. Bureau/office policies are expected to issue and distribute exit procedures which will ensure cancellation of cards upon separation.

Supervisors are expected to take necessary actions to ensure that travel charge card bills are promptly resolved by travelers. Should the traveler elect to **not** accept the individually issued Government-sponsored travel charge card, or in the event that the travel charge card is subsequently revoked by the charge card contractor for non payment, the employee will be

responsible for financing travel costs **as if** they had a travel charge card. No special consideration (in the form of advances or funding of travel expenses) will be provided to travelers who have failed to maintain their travel charge card in good standing. Bureaus/offices should ensure that supervisors receive monthly management reports regarding the status of delinquent travel charge card accounts for their employees.

B. Use of ATM for Travel Advances in Lieu of Bureau/Office Issued Travel Advances

It is expected that travel advances will be obtained using travel charge card ATM privileges. Bureaus/offices that are not currently utilizing ATM as the primary vehicle for travel advance issuance will be expected to implement this policy by the beginning of Fiscal Year (FY) 1998. Additional guidance pertaining to ATM implementation is available in the final report of the Finance Officers Partnership (FOP), Project Action Team #4.

C. Exceptions to the Government Sponsored Charge Card/ATM Policy

Bureaus/offices seeking an exception to the Government-sponsored travel charge card/ATM policy will need to request an exemption from the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget.

D. Payment Methods of Travelers Claim

Due to the recent passage of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 (DCIA), variations in the payment methods by the bureaus/offices within the Department of Interior will be discontinued through the mandatory use of Direct Deposit of Electronic Funds Transfer (DD/EFT). Bureaus/Offices are expected to take immediate steps to expand the use of DD/EFT for travel reimbursements and make the necessary system and procedural changes to achieve full compliance with DCIA.

C. Use of AT&T FTS 2000 Telephone Charge Card for Official Travel

To realize the potential for savings and eliminate the need to list telephone charges on the travel voucher, bureaus/offices should arrange for a telephone charge card (AT&T FTS 2000) to be made available to its travelers. (Telephone charges on FTS 2000 are frequently 1/10th of the amount charged by hotel/motel establishments, thus providing substantial opportunity for savings.) Cards can be issued to organizational units or individual travelers, at the discretion of the bureaus/offices. Appropriate coordination/management of the telephone card program should be provided.

D. Post Payment Audit of Travel Vouchers

The DOI Travel Lab recommended the use of post payment audit by the bureau paying office to substantially reduce the reimbursement time for travel voucher claims, and the General Accounting Office (GAO) has issued a waiver to the Department for travel vouchers which are generated by an automated travel system.

The use of Post Payment Audits will facilitate achieving the goal of providing traveler reimbursement within the stated target of 5 days following receipt by the paying office when

travel voucher claims are prepared by an automated travel system. Since over 40 percent of all travel vouchers continue to be prepared manually, however, it is recommended that the post payment audit initiative be deferred, pending the recommendations of the Automated Travel System Group, which is under the direction of the Finance Officers Partnership.

III. Travel Process Related

A. Use of Annual Limited Open Authorizations

Significant reductions in administrative costs can be realized through the use of limited open travel authorizations for employees who are expected to travel frequently during the fiscal year. The DOI Travel Lab strongly encouraged the use of limited open travel authorizations in lieu of trip-by-trip authorizations.

The Federal Travel Regulation requires that limited open authorizations be reviewed and revalidated at least quarterly (FTR Sec. 301-1.101 (b)). The Department has obtained a waiver of this requirement from the General Services Administration (GSA). Annual limited open authorizations may now be issued on a full fiscal year basis.

Bureaus/offices are encouraged to make use of this waiver to further reduce the administrative costs and cycle times of travel processing. For convenience, a copy of a sample Limited Open Travel Authorization Form is provided in Exhibit A. Bureaus/offices implementing annual limited open authorizations will be required to establish internal procedures which: (1) ensure that authorizations are canceled when not needed or upon the separation of the employee; and (2) ensure that the required reporting data elements recommended by JFMIP are collected (see Exhibit B). At the direction of individual bureaus, all required travel data elements will be captured on the employee's travel voucher.

B. Handling of Conference, Training & Foreign Travel

Additional reductions in administrative costs can be realized through the use of limited open travel authorizations for the estimated 30,000 trips per year taken by Department employees involving training, conferences, foreign travel and meetings. The Department has obtained a waiver from the requirement (FTR Sec. 301-1.102 (b)) that these trips be authorized on a trip-by-trip basis. Thus, bureaus and offices are encouraged to use limited open travel authorizations for such trips to the maximum extent possible.

The inclusion of the additional travel types on the limited open authorization does not, in any way, change existing policies, procedures and approval requirements associated with conferences, training, and foreign travel. For example, training order form SF182, foreign travel approval form DI-1175, donated travel form DI 2000, and written approval for conferences having more than 30 participants, etc. will still be required. Since travel data elements information previously provided on the trip by trip authorizations will no longer be provided, it is imperative that, at the direction of individual bureaus, all travel vouchers contain full data element requirements, and that the data

elements be captured by the accounting system.

C. Reduction/Elimination of Obligating Temporary Duty Travel

The Travel Lab has concluded that the recording of an obligation amount from the estimates on a travel authorization prior to travel is costly, requires continuous monitoring and updating, and is of limited value in the control of funds. In addition, obligation estimates frequently require modification when vouchers are filed or trips are canceled. Although the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR Sec. 301-1.102(d)) requires that travel authorizations include estimates of the cost of the travel and that these estimates be used to obligate the funds, the Department has obtained a waiver from this requirement.

Bureaus and offices are encouraged to defer the obligation of travel costs until trips are completed and the travel voucher is filed. This is particularly important since the widespread use of Annual Limited Open Travel Authorizations is being recommended, and these authorizations do not contain trip-by-trip cost estimates.

In order to implement this policy, each bureau/office is expected to take the necessary actions to ensure that adequate internal controls exist to preclude violations of the Antideficiency Act and other laws and regulations. Adequate internal controls would address such items as fiscal year-end accruals, planned trips of a material nature, and other events of importance.

D. Encouraged Use of Individual Government-Sponsored Travel Charge Card for Purchase of Commercial Transportation Tickets

Bureaus/offices presently utilize over 700 corporate Government Transportation Accounts (GTA) to purchase commercial transportation tickets. This creates a substantial burden on program, administrative, and finance office staffs who are responsible for reconciling centralized billing invoices against individual trip expenses. Bureaus/offices which are capable of providing prompt reimbursements to travelers should encourage travelers to charge travel related transportation tickets to their individual Government-sponsored travel charge cards. This will reduce the administrative costs associated with the reconciliation efforts which are presently required and should reduce the level of Prompt Payment interest penalties on GTA accounts which exceeded \$100,000 in FY 1995.

IV. Travel Voucher Preparation Recommendations

Bureaus and Offices are expected to carry out the following changes in travel voucher preparation procedures, upon the issuance of implementing instructions by each bureau/office. (Expected to take place in March 1997.)

A. Simplified Per Diem Calculation

The Joint Financial Management Improvement Program (JFMIP) has recommended, and the GSA has subsequently amended the FTR, to simplify the computation of per diem for the first and last

days of travel (see FAM 97-004, dated February 3, 1997). This procedure is expected to simplify the calculation of per diem, and reduce the number of errors and the corresponding delays in processing of claims. Therefore, a simplified per diem calculation of 75 percent of the applicable M&IE for the first and last day of travel will now be used. Travelers will no longer be required to record the beginning or ending times for official travel which exceeds 24 hours in duration.

B. Eliminate Requirement to Attach Travel Authorization to Voucher

Bureaus/offices implementing Annual Limited Open Travel Authorizations are encouraged to discontinue the practice of attaching a copy of the appropriate travel authorization to each travel voucher, as a result of receiving a GSA waiver from this requirement. While the waiver negates the requirement to attach a travel authorization to each voucher, the travel voucher must contain the necessary reference to a travel authorization number and date to provide a sufficient audit trail. Bureaus/Offices will develop the necessary implementation instructions to assure compliance with this requirement.

This initiative will be implemented **only** in conjunction with the use of Limited Open Travel Authorizations, and bureaus/offices that continue to use trip-by-trip travel authorizations will need to submit copies of these authorizations with each travel voucher claim submitted.

C. Eliminate Requirement to Identify Persons Sharing Transportation

Employees may discontinue listing the names and employing agency of each person traveling together by means of a rental vehicle or special conveyance based on a GSA waiver.

Bureaus/offices are encouraged to comply with the GSA requirement to enforce ethics policies dealing with conflicts of interests in the performance of employee official duties.

D. Eliminate Requirement of Most Receipts for Travel Expenses Under \$75.00

Bureaus/offices should eliminate the receipt requirement for all official travel expenses of less than \$75.00, except for all lodging. The FTR changes in receipt requirements are outlined in FAM 96-49, issued November 5, 1996.

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

3. Bureau of XXXXXXXX
(BUREAU OR OFFICE)

4. NAME Traveler, John Q. SSN: XXX-XX-XXXX

5. OFFICIAL STATION Round House

6. TITLE Docket Control Clerk

7. ACCOUNTING OFFICE XXXXXX Fiscal Office

You are authorized to travel as indicated below and to incur necessary expenses in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
By signing below, you acknowledge understanding the roles and responsibilities of employees for travel, as described on the back of this form.

PLACES OF TRAVEL

8. FROM: Round House, XXXXXXX (State)

9. TO: All points domestic and foreign when necessary to conduct official business of the Docket Control Office, when directed to do so by your Supervisor.

10. PURPOSE AND REMARKS: Performance of official duties of the Docket Control Office, including training and conference attendance. Foreign travel, training and conference attendance must meet the requirements of DOI and Bureau XXX policies and requirements, including preparation of training forms and obtaining approval of foreign travel. Quarterly review of this travel authorization has been waived by GSA.

You may perform travel under this authorization only when directed to do so by your Supervisor.

11. PER DIEM ALLOWANCE: Maximum per diem authorized in accordance with 41CFR301-7. Actual subsistence justification and approval must be shown on the travel reimbursement voucher. No per diem allowance will be allowed for duty within 50 miles of either the permanent duty point or residence. No per diem will be paid for travel of less than 12 hours.

12. PERIOD OF TRAVEL: Beginning on or about 02/24/97

Ending on or about 09/30/97

MODE OF TRAVEL

13. ☒ Common carrier

14. ☐ Extra fare

15. ☒ Government-owned conveyance

16. ☒ Privately owned

at a mileage rate of \$.31

, subject to: Approval by your supervisor.

(a) ☐ Administratively determined to be to the advantage of the Government

(b) ☐ A showing of advantage to the Government

© ☐ Not to exceed cost by common carrier, including consideration of Per Diem allowance

MISCELLANEOUS

17. ☐ Transportation immediate family

19. ☐ Shipment household goods and personal effects

18. ☐ Other (specify) ☒ Use of taxi or rental car when necessary to conduct official business

ESTIMATED COST

20. Transportation \$ N/A

//s// John Q. Traveler

26. John Q. Traveler

(REQUESTER'S SIGNATURE)

21. Per Diem N/A

22. Other N/A

27. Docket Control Clerk

(TITLE)

23. TOTAL \$ N/A

//s// I.M. Supervisor

24. CHARGED TO: XX-XXX-X/97-98

28. I. M. Supervisor

(AUTHORIZING OFFICER'S SIGNATURE)

25. _____

(FISCAL OFFICER'S SIGNATURE)

29. Director, Docket Control Group

(TITLE)

(BACK OF TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION FORM)
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL EMPLOYEES
WITH REGARD TO TRAVEL

As the nation's principal steward for natural resources, the Department relies heavily on travel to fulfill many of its mandated missions. The respective roles and responsibilities of employees and supervisors in the travel process are articulated below:

General Guidelines

- DOI's policy is to make travel as convenient and painless to employees as possible, as well as "economically neutral". "Economically neutral" means that employees traveling on official business are not expected to use their own personal funds to finance official travel.
- The Department has arranged to have each employee, who is expected to travel, to receive an individual Government-sponsored travel charge card, which is an important element of the Department's travel program.
- Travelers are expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses while on official government travel that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.

What Travelers Can Expect

- To receive an individual Government-sponsored travel charge card.
- To receive an advance of funds for travel in an amount which covers only the expected meals and incidental expenses associated with a trip. The advance will be provided primarily through the use of ATM.
- To have the services of a Travel Management Center (TMC) available to them, for making the necessary travel arrangements and providing ticketing services.
- To promptly receive and be paid any travel reimbursement approved by your supervisor and owed to you.
- To receive prompt professional advice and guidance on matters relating to travel policy or regulations.

What is Expected of Travelers

- To perform official travel, as directed by your supervisor.
- To use your individual Government-sponsored travel charge card for all chargeable expenses associated with official travel.
- To abide by Federal, Departmental and bureau policies and procedures governing official travel.
- To limit your ATM travel advance amount to estimated meals and incidental expenses that cannot be charged to your travel card, as authorized by Departmental policy and Government travel regulations.
- To use the services of the Department's recommended or contracted Travel Management Center(s) for all travel related services.
- To submit your travel voucher for approval within five days after completion of travel.
- To promptly pay the travel charge card contractor for amounts charged on your individual Government-sponsored travel charge card.

What is Expected of Travelers (Continued)

- To use a Government issued telephone charge card for all authorized telephone calls while on official travel.

What is Expected of Supervisors

- To ensure that employees who are expected to travel receive an individual Government-sponsored travel charge card prior to commencing official travel.
- To authorize and approve travel in support of the organization's mission.
- To ensure directed travel is carried out as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- To approve and review travel vouchers promptly upon receipt.
- To ensure approved travel was necessary to achieve program objectives, charges appear reasonable and travel actually took place.
- To initiate disciplinary action against employees whose travel advance or individual Government-sponsored travel charge card's are delinquent or misused through no fault of the Department and/or bureau/office.
- As "Accountable Owners" (individuals responsible for carrying out Departmental policies relating to travel), DOI supervisors are expected, when necessary, to obtain assistance/advice relating to the authorizations and approvals of travel expenses to ensure adherence to travel policies and regulations.

EXHIBIT B**JFMIP DATA ELEMENTS**

The following data elements are recommended for the recording and reporting of temporary duty travel. These elements are divided into two tiers. The first tier are basic data elements by which information is categorized. The second tier are predefined standard data elements required for regulatory reporting purposes. An agency may prescribe additional Tier #2 data elements as needed for that agency's internal requirements or needs.

	<u>Tier #1</u>	<u>Tier #2</u>
1.	Name of Traveler	Last, First, Middle Initial (if any)
2.	Social Security Number	As Assigned
3.	Travel Control Number	As prescribed by agency
4.	Travel Organization and Origin (2)	(1) Authorizing Organization (2) Departure/Return (home/office/other)
5.	Type of Travel (3)	(1) TDY/Relocation/Invitation (2) CONUS/Foreign/Non-Foreign (3) Unlimited/Limited/Single Trip
6.	Travel Purpose (single code)	As prescribed by OMB
7.	Itinerary (2)	(1) Authorized Location(s) of Duty (2) Authorized Date(s) at each location (3) Voucher Variance (a) Location(s) (b) Date(s) at each location
8.	Transportation	(1) Mode (air/rail/pov/gov) (2) Class (1st/business/coach) (3) Type (contract/non-contract/foreign flag) (4) Method of Payment (GTR/GTS/Other)
9.	Transportation Expense (2)	(1) Authorization - Estimate (2) Voucher - Actual
10.	Lodging Expense (4)	(1) Authorization - Estimate (2) Voucher - Actual (3) Nights - Fire/Safety Compliance (4) Government Furnished Reduction
11.	Meals and Incidental Expense (3)	(1) Authorization - Estimate (2) Voucher - Actual (3) Government Furnished Reduction
12.	Other Expense (3)	(1) Type (local transportation/official phone calls/currency fees/exit fees/etc.) (2) Authorization - Estimate (3) Voucher - Actual
13.	Fund Source	Accounting Classification

Each Tier #1 expense (transportation, lodging, meals and incidental, and other) has two Tier #2 factors: First, authorization - estimate reflects the pre-determined cost for travel to be performed; Second, voucher - actual reflects the amount incurred and claimed. Complete the Voucher Variance in Tier #2 for the Tier #1 itinerary when travel is not performed as authorized.